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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000075

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION OBSERVER TEAM STILL AT WORK WHILE
ELECTION COMMISSION DELAYS PUBLIC TALK ON COMPLAINTS

REF: BAGHDAD 0065

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. The international monitoring team (IMIE) continues its post-election assessment work, and has decided that its building workload will require postponement of its preliminary report about January 14. Partly as a result of this new date, the Iraqi election commission (IECI) has decided to postpone announcing the results of their own investigations into election complaints until after the Eid holiday that starts January 10 or 11. The IMIE team appears to be well received by the political parties, with the Allawi team expressing satisfaction with the IMIE work as Allawi looks towards the work of forming a new government. End summary.

IMIE MOVES FORWARD WITH ITS POST-ELECTION ASSESSMENT

2. (C) The International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) has adjusted the timeline for presenting its preliminary report, with January 14 as the new target date. In-country IMIE team coordinator Mazen Chouib told PolOff on January 9 that the team encountered more work than expected, and needed more time to pour over the piles of documents the team obtained from both the IECI and the various political parties they have met with during the past week. Chouib insisted that the date change reflected the level of work; no one should expect any surprise findings or announcements on the 14th. He also underlined that the IMIE's objective was to conduct an assessment of the complaints process and overall elections procedures, and not/not to conduct a post-election investigation. He admitted that this type of work (i.e. a post-election assessment) was new territory for IMIE and is not contained in its charter. However, he expressed confidence that the team members have the requisite expertise to produce credible results within the coming weeks.

3. (C) Chouib stated that the two Arab League members were particularly well-received by the political party leaders. Identified simply as members of the Arab League with no mention of nationality, both team members, Disouki Abaza, an Egyptian and Head of the Arab Affairs Department, and Ali El Jaroche, a Lebanese and a Legal Advisor (also a former judge), have quickly gained the confidence of the Iraqis as well as the other IMIE team members. Chouib said that the team has finished its meeting with all major and several smaller political parties, and will now focus on documentation review. He revealed that although the team does not anticipate any new developments resulting from their assessment, the final report will likely contain recommendations for a revision of the IECI legal framework as well as a need for capacity building in order to address inherent deficiencies in IECI structure and operations.

IECI POSTPONES ANNOUNCING COMPLAINTS RESULTS

4. (C) Earlier in the day, IECI International Commissioner Craig Jenness told PolOff that the IECI Board of Directors decided not to announce the final results of the complaint process at a press conference previously scheduled for January 9. Instead, Jenness stated that the announcement will be postponed until after the Eid holidays and, hopefully, after the IMIE gives its preliminary report.

5. (C) When Chouib learned about the postponement by the IECI, he told PolOff that he did not want the work of the IMIE to interfere in any way with the activities of the IECI, and assured that the IMIE will only take the minimum time necessary to complete their assessment. (Comment: This timing is contrary to IECI previous statements that their timeline would remain independent from the IMIE timeline. However, a slight

delay of this announcement is politically more palatable and should provide for a more positive respite for all parties during Eid. End comment.) Chouib estimated that IMIE should have a final report completed within two to three weeks, and that their preliminary report should be enough to address the concerns of the political parties on the fairness and objectivity of the election process.

ALLAWI CAMP OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE IMIE TEAM

16. (C) On January 8, Ibrahim Al-Janabi, Chief of Staff to Dr. Ayad Allawi, told PolOffs and PolFSN that key members of MARAM had previously met with the IMIE team and provided them extensive documentation on election-related complaints (ref). He explained that the information was presented to the team in four specific election-related stages: one month prior to the elections, the 24-hour media blackout period prior to election day, activities during election day, and actions during the period following the elections.

17. (C) Al-Janabi expressed satisfaction with the level of expertise on the IMIE team, especially from the Arab League members, describing the team as good listeners. He also stated that he does not see a need to re-run any parts of the election, and that the formation of government is paramount. He also said that getting the violations on record by an independent body would be sufficient enough to move past the elections.

COMMENT

18. (C) As noted ref, we sense that at least some of the groups arguing most loudly against in the election results are moderating their tone. Meanwhile, the IECI Board of Directors is still not fully convinced about the need for the international IMIE group to conduct an assessment of the election's technical aspects. However, the Board accepts the need for the IMIE assessment to act as a political tool to complement the apolitical technical work of the ICEI. The willingness of the IMIE team to craft an assessment process while giving due consideration to Iraqi political realities is refreshing and should go a long way to producing a useful final report. Post will monitor IMIE's progress closely to ensure that the timeline for its assessment does not expand, and to encourage IMIE to focus on its timeline.
KHALILZAD